OH, the places you’ll go

Kansas 4-H members host youth from Ohio as part of interstate exchange program

By Annika Wiebers, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – A group of 4-H members from Kansas and Ohio recently got together through an interstate exchange program to discover similarities and differences between programs in their two states.

Ten 4-H members aged 11 to 18 travelled from Van Wert, Ohio and were paired with Kansas 4-H members from Riley, Pottawattamie and Clay counties. The youth were strategically matched so they would be staying with someone of a similar age and interests.

“It’s a great experience for the kids to make connections with other youth and learn about a different state,” said Cherie Trieb, the Kansas 4-H exchange program coordinator.

During their week-long stay, the members traveled to the State Capitol building in Topeka, Fort Riley military base, and the Strataca salt mines in Hutchinson, among other stops. When the group didn’t have plans, Kansas host families were free to take their exchange delegate to see other sights in the area.

“It was fun visiting the waterfalls and seeing those,” said Katie Gamble, one of the Ohio delegates, referring to the Geary Lake waterfalls.

Gamble also noticed differences between agricultural operations in Kansas and Ohio. “There were a lot of cattle farms and grass (in Kansas) whereas we have more farmland,” she said.

Beyond sightseeing and visiting parts of the Kansas agricultural industry, Trieb said another purpose of the exchange is to share ideas between the two states’ 4-H programs.

“One unique thing that 4-Hers in Kansas are doing is they have groups that kids from different counties can join, so that there are more people to (interact) with,” Gamble said.

Chayla Maichel, who was Gamble’s Kansas host, had similar insights about the two exchange programs.
“The Ohio group was a (local) 4-H club, unlike ours that pulls members from different clubs in three counties,” she said. “When they host (exchange trips in Ohio), they always get together in the evening whether or not they did an activity during the day. They believe that helps the visiting 4-Hers adjust and allows all of them to interact and form friendships.”

Learning aside, Maichel noted that the real treasure at the end of the trip is the connections youth have made with each other.

“Hosting someone in your home that you have never met before and forming a friendship is such a valuable experience.” Maichel said.

To complete the exchange, the Kansas 4-H members are planning to travel to Ohio in the summer of 2023. The goal is for most of the youth to be paired with the same delegates they hosted this summer.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas 4-H Youth Development, https://www.kansas4-h.org

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Story by:
Annika Wiebers
annikaw@ksu.edu

For more information:
Cherie Trieb
785-844-0781
triebtribewabbitry@yahoo.com